

John Sheldon
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SHORT ACCOUNT

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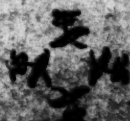
OF THE

L I F E,

TRIALS *and* DELIVERANCES

OF

THOMAS MITCHELL



L E E D S

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A S H O R T

ACCOUNT of THOMAS MITCHELL.



1. **I** Was born in the parish of *Bingley, York-shire*, Dec. 3, 1726. My Parents both died in the Faith. I lived with them seven years, and seven years more with an Uncle, who was in the same parish. When I was turned four years old, my Mother went one day to market, and left me to take care of the house and two younger children. She had not been gone long before I set the bed on fire. A neighbour seeing the smoke, and thinking the house was on fire, came with all speed to our assistance. In a short time she, with some others, extinguished the fire. Had it not been for this providential assistance, we might all have been burnt to death, for we had not sense to get out of the way.—From five years old I had strong convictions at times, and put up many prayers for mercy. And though I had no one to teach me, yet I had the fear of God in my heart. If I was overtaken in any sin, I was much troubled till I had said my prayers, which I thought would make all up.

2. At

2. At fourteen, I was bound apprentice to a Mason. While I lived with my Master, I had little concern for my soul. But a few years after, at the time of the Rebellion, I enlisted among the Yorkshire Blues. I continued with them about a year. There was one man among us; who had the fear of God before his eyes. He gave me good advice, which one time, in particular, took great effect upon me and my comrade. We both of us were under deep convictions, but knew not what to do to be saved. I began to fear death exceedingly, knowing I was not fit to die. These words followed me continually, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, written in the book of the law to do them.* I thought I must fulfil it; but I thought I grew worse and worse, till my load was many times heavier than I could bear.

3. In the year 1746, the Rebellion being over, we were discharged. I then sought for a people that feared God, and soon joined the Methodists. I heard *John Nelson* several times, and began to have some hope of finding mercy: some time after I went to hear Mr. *Grinshaw*, and was convinced that we are to be saved by faith: yea, that the very worst of sinners might be saved, by faith in Jesus Christ. Soon after, I heard Mr. *Charles Wesley* preach from these words; *I am determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.* He shewed clearly, that Christ is able and willing to save the greatest

sinners. I was much refreshed under the sermon, and much more so, in singing these words :

Whither should a sinner go ?

His wounds for me stand open'd wide :

Only Jesus will I know,

And Jesus crucified.

4. But when he told us, we might know our sins forgiven in this life ; yea, this very moment, it seemed to me a new doctrine, and I could not believe it at all. But I continued in prayer ; and in a few days, I was convinced of it to my great joy. The love of Christ, broke into my soul, and drove away all guilt and fear : and at the same time he filled my heart with love both to God and man. I saw that God was my salvation, and could trust him, and praise him with joyful lips. I could sing with all my heart,

O what shall I do, My Saviour to praise ?

So faithful and true, So plenteous in grace ?

So strong to deliver, So good to redeem,

The weakest believer, That hangs upon him ?

5. Soon after this, Mr. *John Wesley* came to *Bradforth*, and preached on, *This one thing I do*. He joined several of us together in a class, which met about a mile from the town. But all of them fell back, and left me alone ; yet afterward some of them returned. Before this, I thought my hill was so strong, that I could never be moved. But seeing so many fall into sin, I began to feel an evil heart of unbelief, and was fully convinced, that there must

must be a farther change in my heart, before I could be established in grace. Afterward I removed to *Kighley*, and had many opportunities of hearing, and profiting by Mr. *Grimshaw*. But feeling my corruptions, with strong temptations, I fell into great doubts. I was almost in despair. I could scarce pray at all, and was tempted to murder myself. One day, as I was going to hear Mr. *Grimshaw*, and going over a bridge, I was strongly tempted to leap into the river; but the Lord had mercy upon me, and delivered me from this temptation. Yet still I had many fears. I was in this state near half a year, finding no comfort in any thing. But one evening, one of our friends prayed in the Society, and my soul was set at liberty. All my doubts fled away, and faith and love once more sprung up in my heart. I afterwards saw, that God had a farther end in these trials and deliverances.

6. Not long after this, I felt a great desire to tell others what God had done for my soul. I wanted my fellow-creatures to turn to the Lord, but saw myself utterly unfit to speak for him. I saw the neighbourhood, in which I lived, abounding with all manner of wickedness. And no man caring for their souls, or warning them to flee from the wrath to come. I began to reprove sin wherever I was, though many hated me for so doing. I did not regard that; for God gave me an invincible courage. But still I did not see, and held

Whether I was called to speak in public or no. After many reasonings in my mind, I ventured to give notice of a meeting. When the time came, my soul was bowed down within me; my bones shaked, and one knee smote against the other. I had many to hear me: some of them heard with pain, as my gifts were very small, and advised me to speak no more in public. But one young woman was convinced of her lost condition, and never rested till she found redemption.

7. But this did not satisfy my friends. So, as they were not willing to receive me, I went to those that would; and God began to bless my weak endeavours. Yet I was not satisfied myself. For several weeks I had great trouble in my mind. I thought no man's case was like mine. Sometimes I wished, I had never been born. Most of my friends were against me. I was full of fears within, and had a persecuting world without. But all this time my heart was drawn out in prayer, that God would shew me the way wherein I should go. Being now employed at Sir *Walter Calverley's*, in the parish of *Guiseley*, I met with a few serious people at *Yeadon*. They were just setting out in the ways of God, and desired me to give a word of exhortation among them. I did so a few times, and God was pleased to bless it to their souls. The little Society increased, and they all dearly loved one another. But Satan was not idle. Every time we unbelier, a riotous mob gathered round the house, and abused us much.

8. On

8. One evening, while *William Darney* was preaching, the Curate of *Guiseley* came at the head of a large mob, who threw eggs in his face, pulled him down, dragged him out of the house on the ground, and stamped upon him. The Curate himself then thought it was enough, and bade them let him alone, and go their way. Sometime after, *Jonathun Maskew* came. As soon as he began to speak, the same mob came, pulled him down, and dragged him out of the house. They then tore off his clothes, and dragged him along upon his naked back, over the gravel and pavement. When they thought they had sufficiently bruised him, they let him go, and went away. With much difficulty he crept to a friend's house, where they dressed his wounds, and got him some clothes. It was my turn to go next. No sooner was I at the town, than the mob came, like so many roaring lions. My friends advised me not to preach that night; and undertook to carry me out of the town. But the mob followed me in a great rage, and stoned me for near two miles, so that it was several weeks before I got well of the bruises I then received.

9. About this time a carpenter was swearing horribly, whom I calmly reposed. He immediately flew in a violent passion, and having an axe in his hand, lifted it up, and swore he would cleave my head in a moment. But just as he was going to strike, a man that stood by, snatched hold of his arm, and held him,

him, till his passion cooled. At first, I felt a little fear, but it soon vanished away.

10. While I was working at Sir *Walter's*, some one informed him, that I was a Methodist. He was much displeased, saying, "I like him for a workman; but I hate his Religion." This was chiefly owing to his steward, whom I had often reproved for swearing. He mortally hated me on that account. But in a little time he was taken ill. Perceiving himself worse, he sent a message to *me*, earnestly desiring I would come and pray with him. I went, and found him in an agony of conviction, crying aloud for mercy. I shewed him where mercy was to be found, and then went to prayer with him. While I was praying, his heart seemed broken, and he was bathed in tears. He owned, he had been a grievous sinner; but he cried to God with his latest breath, and I believe, not in vain.

11. I stayed some time after in these parts, and was fully employed. All the day I wrought diligently at my business; in the evenings I called sinners to repentance. And now the mobs were not so furious, so that we had no considerable interruption. In the mean time, I waited to see, whether the Lord had any thing for me to do? I made it matter of continual prayer, that he would make my way plain before me. And in a little while, I had much more of the best work upon my hands. I was desired to give an exhortation at a village called *Hartwith*. I went thither several

several times. Several here were deeply convinced of sin : and two or three soon found redemption in the blood of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins. Afterwards I was invited to *Tbirske*. Here I found a few hungry souls. But they were as sheep without a shepherd, seldom hearing any thing like the gospel. I spent two nights among them. The serious people were much refreshed : some were awakened and saw their danger, and cried out for mercy.

12. After this I went to *Stockton*, where I found a lively people, who had been in society for some time. I preached several times among them with great liberty of soul, and freedom of speech ; and to all appearance the word had much effect on the hearers. Here I met with Mr. *Larwood*, who behaved very kindly to me, and told me he hoped I should be very useful if I kept humble. He then sent me before him to *York* and *Leeds*, where I preached, and gave notice of his coming. From *Leeds* I went to *Birstal*. It happened to be their preaching-night. *John Nelson* was sick in bed, so the people desired me to preach and give them a word of exhortation. Accordingly I preached in the best manner I could, and the people seemed well satisfied. The next day I went to *Highb-Town*, and preached to a large congregation in the evening. I had much liberty in speaking, and found a great blessing to my own soul ; and I have reason to believe that the people were well satisfied.

13. From

13. From *Birstal* I went to *Heptonstall*. Here I met with a lively people, who received me very kindly. I gave several exhortations among them, and the word went with power to many hearts. Among others, a very tall man, who was butcher, was cut to the heart. But it had a very bad effect upon him for the present; for he went home and beat his wife in a most terrible manner, because he thought she had told me of all his sinful ways. But afterwards he was convinced and converted. I continued some time in these parts, and went to several places in *Lancashire*. Here also I found many were awakened, and several found peace with God, while I was among them. I endeavoured to form a regular circuit in these parts, and in a little time gained my point.

14. I continued here some time, and have reason to hope that I was useful among them. In one place I met with a mob of women who put me into a pond of water, which took me nearly over my head. But by the blessing of God, I got out safe, and walked about three miles in my wet clothes, but I caught cold. I continued some time in these parts encouraged by the example and advice of good Mr. *Grimshaw*.

15. One time *Paul Greenwood* and I called at his house together, and he gave us a very warm exhortation, which I shall not so forget. He said, "If you are sent of God to preach the gospel, all hell will be up in arms against you."

against you. Prepare for the battle, and stand fast in the good ways of God. Indeed you must not expect to gain much of this world's goods by preaching the gospel. What you get must come through the devil's teeth; and he will hold it as fast as he can. I count every covetous man to be one of the devil's teeth. And he will let nothing go, for God and his cause, but what is forced from him."

16. In the year 1751, I was stationed in *Lincolnshire*. I found a serious people and an open door; but there were many adversaries. This was far the most trying year which I had ever known. But in every temptation God made a way to escape, that I might be able to bear it.

On Sunday, August the 7th, I came to *Rangdale*, very early in the morning. I preached, as usual, at five. About six, two Constables came, at the head of a large mob. They violently broke in upon the people, seized upon me, pulled me down, and took me to a public house, where they kept me till four in the afternoon. Then one of the Constables seemed to relent, and said, "I will go to the Minister, and enquire of him, whether we may not now let the poor man go?" When he came back, he said, "They were not to let him go yet." So he took me out to the mob, who presently hurried me away, and threw me into a pool of standing water. It took me up to the neck. Several times I strove to get out, but they pitched me

me in again. They told me I must go thro' it seven times. I did so, and then they let me come out. When I had got upon dry ground, a man stood ready with a pot full of white paint. He painted me all over from head to foot; and then they carried me into a public house again. Here I was kept till they had put five more of our friends into the water. Then they came and took me out again, and carried me to a great pond, which was railed in on every side, being ten or twelve feet deep. Here four men took me by my legs and arms, and swung me backward and forward. For a moment I felt the flesh shrink; but it was quickly gone. I gave myself up to the Lord, and was content his will should be done. They swung me two or three times, and then threw me as far as they could into the water. The fall and the water soon took away my senses, so that I felt nothing more. But some of them were not willing to have me drowned. So they watched till I came above water, and then catching hold of my clothes with a long pole, made shift to drag me out.

17. I lay senseless for some time. When I came to myself, I saw only two men standing by me. One of them helped me up, and desired me to go with him. He brought me to a little house, where they quickly put me to bed. But I had not lain long, before the mob came again, pulled me out of bed, carried me into the street, and swore they would

take

take away one of my limbs, if I would not promise, to come there no more. I told them, "I can promise no such thing." But the man that had hold of me, promised for me, and took me back into the house, and put me to bed again.

Some of the mob then went to the Minister again, to know what they must do with me? He told them, "You must take him out of the parish." So they came, and took me out of bed a second time. But I had no clothes to put on; my own being wet, and also covered with paint. But they put an old coat about me, took me about a mile, and set me upon a little hill. They then shouted three times, "God save the King, and the Devil take the preacher!"

18. Here they left me pennyless and friendless: for no one durst come near me. And my strength was nearly gone; so that I had much ado to walk, or even to stand. But from the beginning to the end, my mind was in perfect peace. I found no anger or resentment, but could heartily pray for my persecutors. But I knew not what to do, or where to go. Indeed one of our friends lived three or four miles off. But I was so weak and ill, that it did not seem possible for me to get so far. However, I trusted in God, and set out: and at length I got to the house. The family did every thing for me that was in their power: they got me clothes, and whatever else was needful. I rested four days with

them, in which time my strength was tolerably restored. Then I went into the Circuit, where I met with more persecution. As I was preaching in a certain villiage in the *Fen*, the mob came into the house, and broke thro' the Congregation, in order to pull me down; but the good Woman of the house took me into the parlour, and stood in the door with a great kitchen-poker in her hand, and told the mob, the first man that came near the door, she would knock him down. As she was big with child, and near the time of her travail, this, with the sight of the great poker, kept them off, so that they could not get at me. However, they stayed some time, and then left the house without doing much harm. After they were gone, I gave an exhortation, went to prayer, and then we went to bed in peace. In the midst of this persecution, many were brought to the saving knowledge of God. And as the sufferings of Christ abounded, so our consolations by Christ abounded also. As to the lions at *Regandale*, an Appeal to the Court of King's-Bench, made both them and the Minister as quiet as lambs.

19. Coming in December into *Lancashire*, I found trials of quite another kind. The poor people were in the utmost confusion, like a flock of frightened sheep. *John Bennet*, who before loved and revered Mr. *Wesley* for his work's sake, since he got into his new Opinions, hated him cordially, and laboured to set all the people against him. He told

them in the open congregation, that Mr. *Wesley* was a Pope, and that he preached nothing but popery. December the 30th, I met him at *Bolton*. I desired him to preach; but he would not. So I got up and spoke as well as I could, though with a heavy heart. After I had done, he met the Society, and said many bitter things of Mr. *Wesley*. He then spread out his hands, and cried, "Popery, Popery! I will not be in connection with him any more." I could not help telling him, "The spirit in which you now speak, is not of God. Neither are you fit for the pulpit, while you are of such a spirit." While I was speaking, a woman that stood by me struck me in the face with all her might. Immediately all the congregation was in an uproar. So I thought it best to retire. Afterwards, I believed it was my duty to expostulate with him. But it did not avail: it seemed to me that all love was departed from him. His mind was wholly set against Mr. *Wesley*, and against the whole Methodist Doctrine and Discipline. And he had infused his own spirit into the people in many places; so that I had hard work among them. But the Lord kept my soul in peace and love. Glory be unto his holy name!

20. In May 1752, I came to *Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, where, after all the storms I had gone through, I was greatly refreshed among loving, peaceable people, with whom I laboured with much satisfaction. And it pleased

the Lord to prosper my labours in *Berwick-upon-Tweed*, *Gateshead-Fell*, and many other places, where many sinners were both convinced and converted to God. One time, while I was at *Berwick*, a poor woman came to the house where I was, with a heavy child on her back: she had come from *Ireland*, and was going into *Scotland*. The woman of the house asked her to come in, and gave her some tea: she seemed to be very poor, and wanted help. But as I had only nine-pence, and had thirty miles to ride the next day, I thought I could not spare her any thing. But after she had got the child again on her back, and was setting off, my heart pitied her; so I gave her sixpence out of my little stock: and had threepence left. But I trusted in God's providence, and knew that he would provide for me. After preaching the next morning, a poor soldier put two shillings into my hand! So God rewarded me four-fold. I could not help praising him for this instance of his goodness to me.

21. On May 8, 1753, I came with Mr *Wesley* from *Newcastle* to *York*. On the 12th he preached to a large congregation; and the next morning, from *Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*. I never saw a congregation so affected. Most of the people were in tears, some for joy, and some from sense of their sins. He had designed to go to *Lincolnshire*. But through the importun-

of the people, he consented to stay a little at *York*, and desired *me* to go in his place.

22. From the following Conference, (at which fourteen preachers were present, beside Mr *Wesley* and his Brother,) I went into *Wiltshire*, where Mr. *Pearce*, of *Bradford*, was as a father to me. While I was in this Circuit, I went to see a young man, (Mr. *Tho. Olivers*,) who had given an exhortation at times among the people. I found him working hard for his bread. He seemed to me to have much sense, and to be very sincere. I wrote to Mr. *Wesley*, and told him that I, and many more thought he might be very useful. Mr. *Wesley* desired he might go with me into *Cornwall*. So we went together, and I believe the Lord made us a blessing to that people: many were convinced and converted, and my friend grew very much in knowledge, and I hope, in the fear of the Lord. He has been a very useful man in the Church of God, and one who has gone through many trials: the Lord help both him and me to fight the good fight of Faith, and to lay hold on eternal life! Here I formed a firm resolution of cleaving more closely to God than ever I had done before. I longed to be wholly freed from the enemies which I carried in my own bosom. I saw no other could possibly hurt me, if I could but conquer *them*. I read the Bible and prayed much, and found many blessings from the Lord. And I found, in particular, an entire disengagement from all earthly things. My soul was

even as a weaned child. I was willing to be any thing or nothing. I had no desire for any thing in this world, but to live unto the glory of God. O how easy does it make every thing, when we can give up all for Christ!

23. After I had spent some time in *Devonshire* and *Cornwall*, I was sent for up to *London*. Here I had a fever for some time. When I was pretty well recovered, Mr. *Wesley* desired me to go down to *Norwich*. I was not well upon the road; but was abundantly worse when I came thither. But following the advice of a skilful man, I was in a while restored to health and strength. Here I found much comfort among a poor, but loving people. I was in this Circuit (putting the first and the second time together) about four years. But in the latter part of this time, I had many trials from *J. Wheatly's* people. Mr. *Wesley* had been prevailed upon to take the *Tabernacle*, and to receive *W.'s* people under his care. *Wheatly* used to call them "my dear Lambs," but such lion-like lambs did I never see. Discipline they knew nothing of; every one would do what was right in his own eyes. And our Doctrine was an abomination to them. Great part of them were grounded in *Antinomianism*. The very sound of *Perfection* they abhorred; they could hardly bear the word *Holiness*. Nothing was pleasing to them, but "Faith, Faith;" without a word either of its inward or outward fruits.

24. Between the first and second time of my

my being at *Norwich*, I spent some time in *Sussex*. The first place that I preached at was *Rye*, where no Methodist had ever preached before. Yet there was no opposition, but they received the word with joy and readiness of mind. And many soon felt the burden of their sins, several of whom quickly found peace with God. Most of these very willingly joined together in a little Society; some of whom are lodged in Abraham's bosom; and others still remain walking in the way to Sion.

25. Hence I went to several country places. But they were not all so peaceable as at *Rye*. At the desire of a serious man I went to *Hawkhurst*; he had requested me to preach at his house. About six in the evening I began. But I had not spoke many words, before a numerous mob broke in, pulled me down from the place where I stood, and forced me out of the house. Then they struck up my heels, and dragged me upon my back about half a mile, to a public house called *Highbgate*, where I found many Gentlemen, with the Minister of the parish. They asked, by what authority do you preach? I answered, "By the authority of King *George*," and shewed them my License. They spoke a little together, and said, "You may go about your business." But observing the house was filled with a drunken mob, I said, "Gentlemen, I will not go, unless I have a Constable to guard me." They immediately sent for a Constable, who guarded me to the house from whence

whence I came. But as it was winter time, and the road very dirty, I was in a poor condition: being a good deal bruised, and all my clothes plaistered over with dirt. However, after I had got some dry clothes, and taken a little refreshment, I prayed with the family, and then God gave me quiet and refreshing sleep. When I came to *London*, I applied to a Lawyer, who sent down Writs for five of the ringleaders. But they quickly came to an agreement. They readily paid all charges. And here ended our persecution in *Suffex*. I found a thankful heart for a good King, good Laws, and Liberty of Conscience. And about this time I had much of the presence of the Lord; he was good to me, both as to my body and soul. I prayed much, and the Lord heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. From *Suffex* I went to *Norwich* the second time, and here found a young woman that I thought would make me a good wife. In October 1760, we were married. I bless the Lord for her, she is one of the most suitable wives for me, that I could have found in all the world.

26. In August 1778, I was stationed in *Staffordshire*, where I spent two years with much satisfaction. The latter year I had many trials, both outward and inward. The work of the Lord did not seem to go forward among the people in some places; but at others, it prospered much, while love and peace prevailed among us; which gave me encouragement.

ment. I found some refreshings in my own soul at times, and I could trust the Lord in every trial. His promises were a means to keep me from being weary and faint in my mind. And by his blessing I got through all, and saw that every trial works for good. The words of the Apostle were of great use to me: *My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* Lord help me to see thy good hand in all my trials, that they may be a means of making me more holy in all manner of conversation!

In July 1780, I set out for *Bristol*, and in my way, met with several of our brethren, some of whom I had not seen for many years. It rejoiced my heart to find them still in the way of the Lord, after all their trials; and that they were still desirous to preach the Gospel of Christ. Our journey was attended with much peace and love; and we rejoiced that the Lord had helped us thus far. At this Conference I was ordered to go to *Canterbury*; and on August 20, I got safe there; my wife and children having arrived one day before me. I was very thankful to the Lord for his goodness in bringing them safe to this place. I had not been here long before I found that True Religion had lost ground. When I left them, two and twenty years ago, they were a loving, lively people. But they fell out by the way, and lost their love one for

for another. I was much troubled to see them so cold and careless in the cause of God. This, with my own infirmities, brought me into much trouble of mind. But I gave myself up to prayer, and begged of the Lord that he would deliver *me*, from whatever hindered his work, *in my own soul*; and that he would do it in his own way. About the middle of October last, he laid his afflicting hand upon me. I had a fever, attended with an ague. This continued half a year. I was under the care of an Apothecary, in *Canterbury*. He did all he could to remove my disorder, but without effect. From *Canterbury* I removed to *Dover*, thinking the change of air would help me; but I still continued as bad as ever. While I was here, Mr. Boardman, one of our Preachers, came to see me, and by Mr. Wesley's, and his desire, I came to *London*. After I arrived, my disorder grew worse and worse, almost every day. On April the 6th, I was so ill that all about me thought I was dying. Doctor Lettsom attended me very constantly, without fee or reward. He was of great service to me. For through the means he made use of, the fever was soon removed.

When I was first taken ill, the Lord removed all uneasiness from my mind. I received great comfort in my soul, and could rejoice in the God of my salvation. Indeed a sense of his goodness continued with me in all my afflictions, which was a cause of such cheer-

cheerfulness, as I had scarce known for twenty years before. I could frequently sing,

How good thou art ! how large thy grace !

How easy to forgive !

The helpless thou delights to raise,

And by thy love I live.

I now look back on the labour of three and thirty years, and I do not repent of it. I am not grown weary, either of my Master, or the work I am engaged in. Though I am weak in body, and in the decline of life, my heart is still engaged in the cause of God. I am never more happy than when I feel the love of Christ in my heart, and am declaring his praise to others. There is nothing like the love of Christ in the heart, to make us holy and happy. It is love alone that expels all sin out of the heart. Wherever love is wanting, there is hell : and where love fills the heart, there is heaven. This has been a medicine to me ever since I set out. When I was low, it was this that raised me up. When sin and Satan beset me on every side, it was this that drove them away.

O love, how cheering is thy ray ?

All pain before thy presence flies :

Care, anguish, sorrow melt away,

Where'er thy healing beams arise,

O Jesus, nothing may I see,

Nothing hear, feel, or think but thee.

Unweary'd

Unweary'd may I this pursue,
 Dauntless to the high prize aspire;
 Hourly within my breast renew
 This holy flame, this heav'nly fire;
 And day and night be all my care,
 To guard this sacred treasure there.

In suff'ring be thy love my peace,
 In weakness be thy love my pow'r:
 And, when the storms of life shall cease,
 Jesus, in that important hour,
 In death, as life, be thou my guide.
 And save me who for me hast died.

F I N I S

